

# Fill the Cup

## Second Session: Letting Go of Thoughts and Judgment

### The Basics of Session Two

How do we begin to create a little more space within us, just a little bit more peace? This week we look at two areas to which we might gently draw our attention: the stream of conversations, thoughts, plans, worries and lists that constantly claims our energy *and* the harsh judgmental stance we take, not just toward others, but also to ourselves.

When we think about “letting go of thoughts” we mean that stream of consciousness, the narrative and internal dialogue, the constant chatter inside us. It is made up of memories, stories, events, ideas, feelings and sensations. Our consciousness is a gift. It is interesting and intricate and astonishing. We can travel through space and time inside our own amazing brains. This spectacle can also, however, take us out of our actual lives, keep us from being present to what is actually happening. We are not able then to be actually here with other people, seeing and understanding and attending to them. We are not even, really, able to be with ourselves.

We also lose our sense of what is true. For instance, have you ever anticipated having a difficult conversation with someone and practiced it in your head. You know, you provide the words and attitudes for yourself *and* that other person. If things don’t go well in this fantasy you’ve created, you find yourself growing angry and indignant. That person then, that *real* person, walks in the room and you are already angry, primed for a fight.

What is playing on the screen inside us and our relationship to it all can have a huge impact on how we experience our actual lives – even *if* we actually experience them. If we can learn to be less attached to our thoughts, to be in a different relationship to them, we can show up in the real world with more peace, with less in our way as we try to move deeper into Love.

Letting go of judgment is a huge opportunity for moving into the Way of Love. We all need to *discern* which ways of being and doing lead us into health and growth and which ways lead us into harm and diminishment. It is appropriate to feel bad when we do harm in the world and to take stock. Judgment is something else. Judgment says not simply that we did something “bad” but that we are “bad.” It is shame-inducing, a kind of labeling that diminishes us.

If we wish to follow Jesus’s admonition to “Judge not”, we need to learn to stop judging ourselves. Many of us speak to ourselves (or think to ourselves) things we would never say to anyone else. We harm ourselves with judgment, and then in our woundedness we judge others.

What if we offer ourselves some lovingkindness instead. Pause throughout your day and check in on yourself: how do you feel, what do you long for, how is your body? Show yourself some honor and respect, affirm that you are beautifully and wonderfully made. Be amazed at what God has made: this body of stardust filled with the very breath of God, pouring God’s love and power into the world.

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### *Letting Go of Thoughts*

Do a session of CP: what were some of the things that flowed through on the river  
Threshold practice: moving from one space or time in your day to another. What do you need to carry with you? Standing in the threshold, Imagine the Living Water pour down upon you to release you of all you are carrying that will not benefit you or those around you.

### *Letting Go of Judgment*

Start with realizing all the ways you judge yourself. What is the tone in which you speak to yourself? From the other end, look for the good (Mr. Rogers look for the helpers). In a hot mess of another human being, where is the good, the life force, the gift? Where is wound, the broken bit, the lost child? Bring in compassion rather than judgment. Know that this will be a process you enter into. Don't judge how good you are in it.

*What we do not remake  
plays nostalgic songs on the jukebox of our guts,  
and leads us in the old comfortable temptation.*

*"Doing It Differently"*

Marge Piercy

### **People Are Hard to Hate Close Up. Move In.**

*I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.*

James Baldwin

"Not caring about our own pain and the pain of others is not working. How much longer are we willing to keep pulling drowning people out of the river one by one, rather than walking to the headwaters of the river to find the source of the pain? What will it take for us to let go of that earned self-righteousness and travel together to the cradle of the pain that is throwing all of us in at such a rate that we couldn't possibly save everyone?"

Pain is unrelenting. It will get our attention. Despite our attempts to drown it in addiction, to physically beat it out of one another, to suffocate it with success and material trappings, or to strangle it with our hate, pain will find a way to make itself known.

Pain will subside only when we acknowledge it and care for it. Addressing it with love and compassion would take only a miniscule percentage of the energy it takes to fight it, but approaching pain head-on is terrifying." (66-67)

Brene Brown

*Braving the Wilderness*

What are things you can do to create just a little bit more spaciousness inside you?

What might empty you out a bit?

Running

Knitting

Driving the car

Cleaning

Sorting

Ironing

Walking in nature

Holding a baby

Playing with a young child

Other Ideas

Morning Pages: getting up and “dumping” your thoughts, longhand, onto three notebook pages. This practice can free you up to move on from things that nag at you or feel burdensome.

Silence in the car: you may not have time to add centering prayer or journaling into your life. Can you create some spaces where there is silence so that you can see what might arise if you are not driving yourself with things to do or filling yourself up with more information? Go somewhere without the radio or a cd playing. Allow your mind the freedom to wander and see what happens. Taking a walk or walking the labyrinth can also allow you to open up and find some inner spaciousness, allowing new sensations or possibilities or insights to arise.